

## **Life after retirement among the university professors**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative research entitled “Life after Retirement among the University Professors”, ascertained the activities and rewards of the university professors during their retirement years. The participants to this study were the professors previously employed from among the six selected universities in Iloilo City, Philippines. Using purposive sampling, the study utilized the activity preference inventory and guide question to gather the data. Results showed that the retirees long to be with the company of people they can socialize and affiliate with, as a substitute for the continuity of roles they used to play; Some do household chores at home, as this is the opportune time for them to do all the things there was never a time to do before; Many entertain themselves through music and newscast; Others read, do part time teaching jobs, and attend seminars to improve their mental acuity; They eat a balanced diet, nutritious food and visit their doctor regularly to keep them physically fit; and serve God by helping activities in their respective religious congregation. Generally, the retirees were inspired by their achievements and those of their children, their work-related accomplishments, and their retirement income. They enjoyed the laurels of their working years, thus, retirement for them was rewarding.

**Keywords:** retirement, activities, coping, rewards, university professors

### **Introduction**

Yesterday’s memories, today’s moments, tomorrow’s hopes... When a multi-aged worker looks ahead to his retirement, the prospect gives him a comfortable glow. Retirement is the time of maximum freedom the individual has always yearned for. The older person is free of the burdens of rearing a family and other mercenaries. Society loosens its social restrictions for him; he sees the strain of his workday replaced by unlimited creative pursuits and leisure.

It is an opportunity for him to learn and do things he long wanted to pursue and to make his life what he wants in relation to the things he values most. Liberated from the partisanship and personal needs of youth, one has a better perspective for enjoying a day of living than ever before. The golden years seem to offer the delights of a continuous vacation.

Positive, healthy attitudes to aging is picturing the process as a place of life where one continues to develop and achieve happiness. There is no doubt that actuations alter with age, but growing old is an enriching process towards the attainment of fulfillment in life: an altruistic person endowed with accumulated wisdom, wit and values.

Despite these positive realities, the years after retirement bring new problems. Declining physical strength limits the older person’s activities. Debilitating illness can make the individual feel demoralizingly helpless. Retirement brings idle hours to be filled and lessens the feelings of worth and self-esteem. The death of a spouse, siblings and friends can make life unbearably lonely, particularly for those whose children live far away from home.

Erikson’s last stage of psychosocial crisis, of integrity versus despair, is concerned with the way a person faces the end of his life. Old age is a time of reflection, on looking back on the events of a lifetime, to the extent that an individual has successfully coped with the problems posed at each earlier stages of life. He has a sense of being wholesome with integrity, of a life well-lived. If the elderly person looks back

on life with regret, seeing it as a series of missed opportunities and failures, the final years will be ones of despair (Atkinson 1987) <sup>[1]</sup>.

This study is anchored on several theories that try to explain what and why people think, feel and behave in certain ways to cope with life after retirement. These are as follows:

### **Disengagement Theory**

This theory refers to a process whereby an individual responds to aging by gradually withdrawing from the various roles and social relationships he occupied in the middle age. Retirement brings along discontinuity of roles portrayed, although retirement may be reacted to differently.

Social disengagement occurs in a variety of ways: Older people may not be sought out for leadership positions in organizations, their employers may force them to retire, their children may no longer want them involved in family decision making, and the government may be responsive to the needs of people who are younger. Such disengagement is often unintended and unrecognized by the society. A number of the elderly do not handle forced losses as well. Some even try to escape with alcohol, drugs, or suicide (Cunning and Henry, 1961) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **The Wear and Tear Theory**

This theory states that the person gets eventually old as he wears off the cells, nerves, muscles, and his physical component through the years. Its main direction is towards aging.

### **The Stress Theory**

Stress theory underscores the hazards of stress and the drain of the body’s immune system. Abdominal ulcers, hypertension, migraine, constipation, and heart ailments develop faster in persons who are often under stress. Stress also narrows one’s way of viewing issues.

**Review of Related Literature and Studies**

**Old age**

People need to accept that growing old is a part of life. Whether one likes it or not, aging is a non-stop process. Some people dread aging, because growing old means slowing down biologically. One can feel insecure, helpless and worthless.

If adult identity is not secured, a person may avoid intimacy and retreat into self-absorption or isolation. Feeling the loss of what a little ego identity he has managed to develop, he avoids intimacy, shunning friendship, and all close associations, thus, leading to depression or loneliness.

Generally, people are concerned about this unknown but unavoidable phenomenon, as it is clearly related to the passage of time, the increased chances of developing illness, which is linked with death.

**Concerns about the Elderly**

The transitions about retirement is hardly an overnight process, often taking a few years to accomplish. At a time when they long for stability, older people are often called on to face drastic and sometimes unwelcome changes.

Due to age, bodily changes occur gradually. Chopra (1993) [3] notes that despite the evidence that aging is shifting, people still believe that aging can be understood strictly as a biological process.

Eventually, elderly people may find that their pensions are insufficient to enable them to live as they had planned and hoped to live. They are faced with the issue of trying to find jobs to supplement their incomes, and move to be close to members of the family. Role discontinuity (Kuan 1993) [9] is another difficulty for the elderly, as the practice in all government institutions is the landmark age for retirement. Individuals past the sixth decade of their life seem to have no program to hold on to despite the fact that health, capabilities, and willingness to work are still within the realm of these people. Furthermore, The elderly experiences pressures from the society, as being aggravated by the cultural trends, which results to a society in which all the young and able-bodied are fully occupied with their own lives and older people are left without any relatives able to help care for them.

On the lighter side, there are some elderly who show integrated personalities who show satisfaction in life. Though disengaged, they are self-directed people managing their own interests in a calm, withdrawn and contented life, who have little need for social networking.

**The Realities of Aging**

Aging is an irrefutable reality (Kuan, 1993) [9]. To live a meaningful old age lifestyle, one must recognize its importance. Recalling happy memories of their earlier years is a reward, a blessing, and an achievement, although old age can be viewed negatively. Aside from the prowess and capabilities, there is a lowering of backup support to maintain their psychological, emotional and physical well-being. Old age can be regarded as the period of diminishing returns.

Positively, old age makes a person reflective and sober. Years in life tempered by both eventful and trivial happenings mellow a person. Accumulated wisdom and knowledge gained through the years makes a person a priceless repository of wisdom and knowledge that can only be learned in a living book of life.

Old age is a matter of attitude and many times people approach aging process according to how they react to it. These are realities one has to accept as it comes naturally.

At times, almost everyone is depressed, and this is true among the retirees. Depression, according to Peplav and Perlman (2000), is the unpleasant experiences that result from a perceived discrepancy between a person’s desired and actual relationship. This emotional distress oftentimes sets in when inherent needs for intimacy and companionship are not met.

**On Retirement**

Retirement means withdrawing from one’s position or occupation, or going into private life, or changing to another activity or interest. To some, retirement is a time to sit and enjoy their laurels – the fame, honor and financial status earned during their working years. For Ottenburg (1995) [10], retirement is the “golden age” and the “leisure years”. Irrespective of the activity a retiree engages in, retirement years should be happy years. It is unfortunate, however, that there are some thoughtless people who have negative attitudes towards retirees and consider them as old people.

Retirement may either be the best time to look forward to, or a major disappointment. The choice depends on the person. Preparation prior to the prospect is the key (Coping with Retirement Stress <http://www.bcit.ca>) retrieved April 2016.

Bender and Jivan’s (2004) study on retirees showed that measures of retirees’ well-being rests on two factors: retirement income and wealth. This is goes to assume that more money leads to increased overall well-being; hence, this result coincides with the findings of this study.

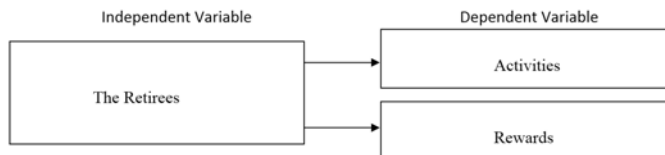
**Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to determine the activities and rewards of the retired professors among the four universities in Iloilo City, Philippines.

Specifically, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What activities do university professors mostly engage in to cope with life after retirement?
2. What are the rewards of these professors during their retirement years?

**The Research Paradigm**



**Fig 1:** Activities and rewards of the retired university professors.

**The Research Design**

**Method and Procedure**

The questionnaire was composed of three parts: Personal information, activity preference inventory, and guide questions on the retirees’ coping with life after retirement.

Permission to gather the names and addresses of these retired professors were secured from the Human Resource officer of the identified universities. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the participants.

An activity preference inventory was used to assess the activities of the retirees to cope with their present status. A

total of 50 respondents previously employed among the six universities answered the questionnaire, while five of them were personally interviewed to introspect in order to substantiate the data gathered.

### The Interviewees

Five of these respondents were interviewed – a 62-year old pastor and accountant with two master's degrees, retired at age 43; an 80-year old former dean of a college for 17 long years; an 82-year old guidance counselor, Ph. D., one of the most sought after professors; a 68-year old widow with seven children, all professionals; and an unmarried professor, the breadwinner of the family even after retiring.

### Findings and Conclusions

Man is by nature a human being, so that a retired person is often lonesome, if he lacks the network of people having a common interest with him.

Role discontinuity with no gradual anticipation of socialization makes transition to old age difficult and painful. One has to devise some ways to get involved.

The retirees' longing for the company of the people they used to be with may be a reason for their joining social activities and affiliating with their own age group, as a substitute for the continuity of the roles that come across after retirement from full time employment.

Family centeredness and other activities such as caring for family members are by nature, inherent in the Filipino culture. Retirees may have been doing these for the sake of their family, or retiring might be the opportune time for them to do things they have longed to do.

Entertaining themselves through music and newscast, TV viewing, and shopping is a wholesome leisure time activity.

Since retirees are professionals, reading, part time teaching jobs, and attending seminars are their usual chores even before retirement. Doing these improves their mental acuity.

Being concerned with their health status, they eat a balanced diet, nutritious food and visit their doctor regularly to keep themselves healthy.

Many retirees find life has meaning and satisfaction in serving God. Religion is the fine sustaining force in their lives. Stonecypher (1980) <sup>[12]</sup> believes that many elderly have experienced significance in spiritual values they had not appreciated in their younger days.

Retirement requires planning if it has to be reached with a feeling of accomplishment, fulfillment and enjoyment. Kuan (1993) <sup>[9]</sup> explains that the level of an individual's income can color one's reaction to retirement.

Erickson's social crisis of integrity versus despair in Atkinson (1977) is concerned with the way a person faces the end of his life. Old age is a time of reflection, on looking back on the events of a lifetime, to the extent that an individual has coped with the problems posed at each of the earlier stages of life. He has a sense of wholesomeness and integrity of a life well lived, especially because the subjects of the study are the intellectually and the educationally competent group of retirees. If the elderly looks back on life with regret, seeing it as a series of missed opportunities and failures, the final years will be ones of despair.

Generally, retirees were inspired by their achievements and work-related accomplishments. They enjoyed the laurels of their working years, thus, retirement for them was rewarding.

### Recommendation

For the would-be retirees, it is suggested that they prepare for the rainy day, think positive, live a simple life, value relationships, have a positive outlook in life, take care of their health, net with fellow retirees, continue learning, and do not forget that God will sustain them physically and spiritually.

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